



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

“I felt more at home than being at home”

A qualitative study about collective identities within the culture of Cape Town gangs

SQ4562, Vetenskapligt arbete i socialt arbete, 15 hp
Scientific Work in Social Work, 15 higher education credits
Bachelor thesis
Semester: Autumn 2017
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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to examine how different social factors and components help form and maintain a collective identity and a sense of belonging within the existing gang culture of Cape Town gangs. Furthermore, we reflected on what type of preventative interventions that could be helpful when addressing the issue of gangs. The study was conducted through four interviews with five informants with different knowledge about Cape Town gangs. We used a qualitative method throughout the study and combined a narrative and a content method of analysis. When analyzing the data, we used these two methods along with a theoretical framework including sociological and social-psychological theories to help us understand how collective identities are created and maintained. This study showed that social factors like social relations and socio-economic circumstances contributed to a collective identity within these gangs. The history, context and stories that the gangs shared were other factors that we found to be contributing.

Key words: gangs, collective identity, gang culture.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the informants who took part in this study, without you it would not have been possible. We would also like to express our appreciation to our supervisor Torbjörn Forkby for the support and guidance he has provided us with throughout this process.

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1. Introduction

Over the last few years Cape Town has become a popular tourist destination and people travel from all over the world to visit the city. However, while there are a lot of tourist attractions and beautiful sights to explore, the city is also struggling with high crime rates and violence. While spending time in Cape Town we encountered several people who had been victims of crimes like robbery, pickpocketing and break ins, but we also came to find out that the daily lives of people in some of the socio-economically vulnerable areas are daily affected by worse types of crimes than these.

1.1 Background and topic

Western Cape, the province that Cape Town is situated in, is a province plagued by gang crime and violence. In a statement from 2015, Dan Plato, the minister of public safety in the Western Cape province, describes the ongoing problem with gangs as an epidemic (Western Cape Government, 2015). He points to the fact that more than 500 gang related murders had taken place in the province over the last year. Furthermore, he stats that 24% of murders and attempted murders that had taken place in the province during the past year were gang related (ibid). To understand how the situation with gang crime in the Cape Town area got to the point where it is today, it is important to know a bit of the history that led up to it.

In 1950 the Apartheid government of South Africa passed an act called Group Areas Act, which was intended to separate different ethnical groups into different geographical areas (Pinnock, 2016). According to the government, the reason why this drastic act was needed was to avoid conflicts and tension between different ethnical groups. The result of the Group Areas Act was that people of other ethnical backgrounds than European, were forced to move from inner-city neighborhoods to areas at the outskirts of the city, called Cape Flats. When implementing this, the government relocated individuals or families separately rather than relocating whole neighborhoods of people to the same area, causing communities to shatter, ripping apart social networks (ibid). The forced relocation of people of certain ethnic groups had severe consequences for some of these communities and led to a rise in divorce rates, a baby boom and an increase in single parent households amongst the people who had

been relocated. A lot of parents in these areas were struggling to care for their children during the daytime, and not many of the children were placed in daycare. The informal social control that had existed in the communities before the relocation was lost as the members of these communities were scattered, and parents were left to raise children on their own, without support from the neighborhood. All this social commotion eventually led to high rates of alcohol use, drug use and unemployment. Street gangs began to form as young people did not have any other place to turn than to each other, and by the time that Apartheid ended and ANC came into power, the violence and the crime was already deeply rooted in these areas (ibid).

Today, many people in and around Cape Town are struggling with poverty, unemployment, drug abuse and poor living conditions. In Manenberg, one of the Cape Flats areas, 94,9% of the households were living off incomes that were below the poverty datum line in 2008 (Pinnock, 2016:82-83). Gang formation and taking part in gang related activities is illegal in South Africa, but that does not mean it is not commonly occurred (Pinnock, 2016). The Cape Flats areas have some of the highest rates of violence in the world, and as previously stated, a relatively big portion of this violence is related to gang activity. The daily lives of people living in these areas are constantly affected by the ongoing violence, and civilians who are not involved in crime or gangs are injured and killed frequently (ibid). In a statement from 2014, Dan Plato points to the fact that 311 bystanders were killed by people involved in gang crime during one year in the Western Cape province (Western Cape Government, 2014). These statements and numbers show that gang crime is a very real phenomenon that affects many people in the Western Cape province, and that the government is aware of the gravity of the problem.

In this study, we are going to examine what social factors help shape these social constellations and cultures that we call criminal gangs, and further try to understand how group identities are maintained within these groups.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how different social factors and components help form and maintain a collective identity and a sense of belonging within the existing gang culture of Cape Town gangs. Furthermore, we are going to reflect on what type of preventative interventions that could be helpful when addressing the issue of gangs.

More specifically to find out:

1.3 Research questions

- In what way are different social factors important to build and maintain the collective identities within the gang culture of Cape Town gangs?
- What are the significant stories, symbols and values that are pointed out as crucial parts in building and maintaining the collective identities within the gang culture of Cape Town gangs?
- What kind of preventative interventions could be put into place to decrease the number of people that join gangs?

1.4 Terminology

In this thesis, we will be using some terms that refer to the different phenomena that we are studying. To clarify what we mean when using these different terms, we are going to give a brief summary of how we define them. When using the term “gang culture” we are not referring to a culture within one specific gang but rather what cultural features that can be found in the majority of the criminal gangs of Cape Town. The term “gang activity” is one that we use when referring to any activity that is related to criminal gangs. “Collective identity” is a term that we use when talking about what it is that creates a sense of unity and fellowship amongst the members of a gang, what it is that separates gang members from people outside of the gang and that makes them feel a sense of belonging in the gang. When using the term “gang crime” we refer to criminal acts that are somehow connected to gangs and performed by gang members. When we mention skin color throughout the study, we use the same terms that are used in the official statistics of the South African government (Stats SA, 2016).

1.5 Relevance

During the first semester of 2017, while interning as social workers in Cape Town, we noticed that several social issues that we have come across, were somehow connected to gang activity. This is one of the reasons why we have chosen to study this phenomenon. The South African government seems to be struggling to find solutions to the ongoing gang epidemic, and a large number of people in Cape Town are affected by the issue in their everyday lives. For a community to be able to work preventively with an issue like this, we believe that it is important to try to understand the social components that are play a role in the process of individuals choosing to join street gangs. We want to know what it is that the gang culture has to offer these individuals, that is not being provided for them elsewhere in the society. Gang activity is not a phenomenon that is exclusive to Cape Town or South Africa, it is also an issue that Sweden is struggling with. In a report from 2016, The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention states that the number of gangs and criminal networks have increased significantly in Sweden over the years, and gang shootings and killings have been given a lot of attention in the media (Brottsförebyggande rådet, 2016). Gaining more understanding about this phenomenon could lead to a better knowledge of what the society is failing to offer these individuals in their social environment, not only in Cape Town.

1.6 Division of work

During the research process, we have strived to do as much as possible of the work together. By doing this, we have been able to reflect together on the material, which we believe has helped us in our process. Although the two of us have not been working with every chapter simultaneously, both of us have somehow been involved in the writing of every chapter of the study.

1.7 Disposition of the study

After this introducing chapter, we will present the context of the studied phenomenon, which is followed by a chapter consisting of previous research that concern the subject of this study. In the fourth section, the theories which we have used to better understand our data are introduced. The following chapter contains a description of the methodological approach and process throughout the study. Followed by the sixth

chapter presenting results and analysis and lastly a concluding chapter with a discussion of the results.

2. Context

It can be difficult for a person who has not been in South Africa to understand the content of this study, if the context is not explained. Therefore, we decided to include this chapter where we will go over some history of the gangs of Cape Town to try and create a better understanding of the context of the study.

2.1 Cape Town gangs

The phenomenon of gang crime in Cape Town has been given a lot of attention, not only by politicians trying to battle the issue, but also by media all over the world. In an article from 2014 (May 29th), Swingler states in the Guardian that there were twelve acknowledged street gangs and three prison gangs in the Western Cape province at the time. Further, he points to the fact that there were around 130 smaller street gangs operating in the Cape Town area. Wegner (2016:53) also states that the number of street gangs that were operating in Cape Town were actually about 130 at the time, and that their total number of members was estimated at around 100 000 individuals. This number would make up about 2.7% of what the total population in Cape Town was estimated to in the year of 2011 (Western Cape Government, 2012). As previously stated, the minister of public safety in the Western Cape province, Dan Plato, refers to the current situation involving gangs in the Western Cape as an epidemic, and the government seems to be struggling to take control over the situation. Within the three years leading up to this statement made by Dan Plato in 2015, only 3% of the murders and attempted murders that were gang related actually led to convictions (Western Cape Government, 2015).

To further understand the problem that the Western Cape province is facing in terms of criminal gangs, knowledge about the overall structures that these gangs form is imperative. The two different types of gangs operating in the Western Cape, which Swingler (2014, May 29th) mentioned in his article in the Guardian, are street gangs and prison gangs. The street gangs in Cape Town are many, with a large number of members, some of the most notorious ones are “The Americans”, “Sexy Boys”, “Mongrels” and “The Hard Livings” (Pinnock, 2016). The street gangs in Cape Town are powerful and control big parts of some areas in and around the city, often through

threats and violence. Not only are they involved in criminal activity such as extortion, carjacking, robbery and murder, but they are also controlling businesses by levying taxes in exchange for their protection and “employing” people who are without jobs.

Street gangs in Cape Town is not a new phenomenon, according to Pinnock (2016) the first street gangs started to form as early as the 1940s, in the area that is called District six. At the time, District six was an area where poverty, overcrowded homes and unemployment were common, and where most of the residents were colored. There was little formal social control in the area and the community resolved this through the use of informal social control, with influential families that would govern the community through their social networks, and often through the use of violence and threats. After World War II, District six was facing an increasing problem with poverty, and the number of crimes started to go up. It started off as a matter of crimes committed by lone offenders or groups of two or three youngsters, but by the late 1940s criminal gangs started to form, and soon there were several street gangs operating in the area.

Besides from the street gangs that are operating in the Western Cape, there is a different type of gang, which dates back to the early 1900s (Steinberg, 2004). These are the so-called number gangs, which consist of three different gangs: the 26s, the 27s and the 28s. The number gangs originated in the prisons of South Africa, and that is also where their hold is still the strongest. These gangs have a story, or a set of stories that form the myth upon which they are built. As the myth is told by members of the number gangs, it is set in South Africa in the early 1800s, but according to Steinberg (2004) it involves a person called Nongoloza, who lived in Johannesburg in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The story about the real historical person called Nongoloza begins outside of prison, where Nongoloza, a young Zulu man, was the leader of a band of robbers that operated in the Johannesburg area, according to historians. The band of robbers was a well-organized group and Nongoloza structured it into something similar to a paramilitary hierarchy, with ranks and imaginary uniforms that were inspired by the military (ibid). The myth that members of the number gangs tell about Nongoloza is one that is very much in-depth and detailed, but also includes different versions of what happened, depending on which number gang the person telling the story belongs to. This myth further includes two more people, other than Nongoloza, who played an important role in the founding of the three different number gangs. The myth about Nongoloza and the

other founders of the number gangs, is one of utter importance in the number gangs of today. These gangs are still structured in a similar way as Nongoloza's band of robbers was structured in the early 1900s, including roles like soldiers, majors, sergeants and so on. The story of Nongoloza also includes a secret language, which is a language that is still very much used today within the gangs of South Africa, called sabela (ibid). If one wants to be a member in one of the number gangs, they must learn the myth about Nongoloza and how the number gangs started. This is done partly through metaphors used in daily life inside prison, but also through studying and memorizing the events the allegedly took place and the stories that are being told (Pinnock, 2016).

Number gangs, also known as prison gangs, have historically been operating inside the prisons of South Africa, rather than on the streets. Although these gangs still hold greater power inside prison than outside, they have come to establish themselves on the streets of Cape Town as well. According to Steinberg (2004), it was in the late 1980s that the street gangs started adopting the way of the number gangs, when some of the biggest street gangs at the time began to organize themselves in a similar manner as the number gangs, using the same rituals and metaphors and even calling themselves a number as well as their street gang name. Pinnock (2016) states that in the early 2000s, most street gangs had adopted the traditions, the discipline and the language of the number gangs and had by doing so developed into a culture with its own ideology, coherent history, language and code of conduct.

3. Previous research

When searching for previous research we had a few different topics which we wanted to include. Based on the purpose that we had chosen for our study, we found that the following were topics that we would need to look at to be able to answer our research questions; *collective identities/subcultures*, *Cape Town gangs* and *meaning/purpose of gang membership*. When looking for previous research on these topics we used the Gothenburg university library's search engine called Super search and Google scholar. We did not find a lot of studies conducted in South Africa on the topic of gangs in particular. We did however find a number of studies that included the topics of collective identity and subcultures, although in other contexts than the South African one. We ended up combining South African and Swedish research, using the studies that we found to be most relevant in relation to our purpose and research questions.

3.1 Meaning and purpose of a gang membership

This dissertation written by Liljeholm Hansson (2014), conducted through observations and interviews in Gothenburg, Sweden, seeks to explain on what causes gangs are created and what social behaviors that are crucial once in the gang. She argues that the creation of gangs can be affected by the environment that the gang members reside in. Areas that are going through big changes and therefore are socio-economically unstable, are more likely to produce gangs rather than the stable areas (ibid). Furthermore, she claims that gangs, and even areas, have different social behavior codes that can explain a person's behavior. Liljeholm Hansson (ibid) came up with three different social behavior codes that she found common in her collected data; *the respect rule*, *the rule to observe silence* and *the loyalty rule*. The first one means that you give signals in different ways to your surroundings, that you can take care of yourself and will fight if you must. One way to do that is to arouse fear by showing your strengths. If you follow this behavior code you will manage to stay away from being bullied, used or abused. The second rule is about keeping quiet, in the meaning of not being a "snitch". This means that you shall not give away any of your fellow gang members to the authorities nor shall you testify against them. The third and last rule states that you need to stay loyal to your gang, which means you always do what is best for the group and never fail them by not doing what you are told, nor go behind their backs. Breaking any of these

rules have tough consequences where violence is the main part of the punishment and it could even lead to death or a terminated membership in the gang.

In a study conducted in Cape Town, Wegner (2016) interviewed four young men who stated that they were all part of gangs. The purpose of the study was to examine the meaning and purpose of engaging in occupations related to being a gang member and how other occupations are influenced by the fact that one is engaged in such. By examining this, she tries to get a better understanding as to why young men choose to be part of a gang. Through the different stories of these four young gang members Wegner (2016) discovers different themes that emerge. As she presents the theme “attraction to gangs”, she points to the fact that these men all came from unstable home environments, and joining a gang gave them a sense of identity as well as a social and financial stability that could not be found in the home. One of the participants mentioned in his interview that he did not feel as if he was anything before joining a gang, but when he joined, it gave him a sense of being a part of something. Being a part of the gang meant that someone was happy to see him and that there were people who supported him. Independency, excitement, power and protection were other feelings that were mentioned as something that attracted these men to be part of gangs. Wegner further argues that protecting one's honor and achieving a sense of manhood were two important purposes for being involved in gang related occupations.

Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) conducted a study on youth crime in socio-economically unstable areas in Gothenburg with the help of interviews and observations, along with document analysis on school papers written by youths. They argue that one of the reasons why youngsters choose to join gangs is that it gives them a sense of belonging and mutual appreciation. Furthermore, the feeling of being someone of importance and feeling accepted by others are things that seem to play a big role in this choice. The culture that is created within a gang creates expectations of the individuals belonging to it, which in turn affects the way that these individuals act.

Having a role model to look up to and the right support are essential parts of avoiding a criminal lifestyle. Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) further argue that there need to be preventative measures put into place on both a micro and macro level. This could for example be governmental funding of sports associations and other leisure activities as

well as working against segregation in the communities (ibid, p.203-205). When a group feel like they are alienated and being downgraded in comparison to the rest of the society, an even bigger segregation is created and alternative ways of living, such as gangsterism, are introduced. A sense of participation in the society is what is essential for these groups in order for them to not join gangs, which includes the possibility of having a job, a residence and to be able to speak up about things that concern them. Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (ibid, p.129) claim that the police along with other authorities are seen as representatives of a society that has turned their back on them, and they are therefore often resented by the gangs. They argue that one way of preventing the negative perception many youths have of the people who represent the society, is to let them come to a school for an exchange of knowledge. Both for the students to learn something from them, as well as for the police and politicians to learn something from the students. This could help the youngsters see that there actually is a human behind the uniform (ibid, p.208-211).

3.2 Subcultures and collective identity

Mooney (2016) wrote an article about the collective identity within the Ducktails, which was a gang that operated in South Africa after World War II, using document analysis in addition to qualitative interviews. What she found especially interesting with this gang was that the members were not all homogeneous as the majority of members in other gangs usually are; they would most often be of the same gender or ethnicity, but not here. The things that formed the collective identity within the Ducktails was the way they looked, the language they spoke and the social rituals they implemented. What more or less creates a subculture is what separates its members from others (ibid). This could be the clothes they wear, the hairstyle they have, the music they listen to and the rules of how to behave towards one another. To pursue different rituals, such as social activities as well as criminal activities, can also emblemize a subculture. An important part is the spoken language within a subculture. The use of specific slangs and social dialects that are created inside a gang (or subculture) when speaking to each other, is essential to a collective identity, according to this study.

Mooney (ibid) further examines what factors contribute the collective identities of a group or subculture. She suggests that some people think that the reason why someone

joins different subcultures is because of their resistance towards the existing class positions in society, which would lead to a homogeneous group, while Mooney further argues that this is not always the case. Others also say that subcultures can consist of a group of people that are exploring their own identity with the help of a collective one. This does however miss the fact that the individuals of a group have a collective identity because of things they have in common, which for example could be class positions, their historical context or something else they agree on. Mooney (2016:65) uses Cohen's argument on what it is that constitutes whether you contribute to a collective identity or not; "however little the members may actually share with each other, it must be more than they share with members of, what they recognize as, other groups". Furthermore, she states that a collective identity very well can be a result of how the collective identity interacts with your individual identity, how these two are balanced. Territory also plays a crucial role in the maintenance of a collective identity in the gang. The area where the members come from, which could also be the area where the gang is located, is something that connects you to each other and reinforce the collective identity within a gang. The connection you have to your area can also be a sanction to gang fights that occur between two rival gangs that come from rival areas.

3.3 Cape Town gangs

In his study on South African prison gangs, Steinberg (2004) conducted several interviews with both members and ex members of the prison gangs of the Western Cape. The aim of his study was to create a better understanding of the history of the gangs and their myths and stories, how they have affected the prison system of South Africa during the 20th century and how they have changed over time. Even though Steinberg mainly focuses on prison gangs inside of prison in his study, he also mentions the connections between prison gangs or number gangs as they are sometimes called, and the gangs on the streets of Western Cape. In his study, Steinberg describes the story of Nongoloza who, as previously stated, is known as one of the founders of the number gangs, a man who lived in early 1900s or 1800s, depending on who one asks. Steinberg states that this is a story that is "woven into the very fabric of gang practice" in prison (ibid, p.11) and points to the fact that the way that rituals and interactions that are gang related are carried out, all stems from the story of Nongoloza and the myth of how the number gangs were founded. He further argues that in doing this, the prisoners find a

way of dealing with the hardships of life in prison, by constructing a narrative of their own and using it to add meaning to their lives in prison and regain control over their situation. In a chapter on how the rituals of the number gangs were introduced to the street gangs of Cape Town, Steinberg lists some of the most famous gang leaders and founders of Cape Town street gangs, who also became some of the most admired and respected individuals at the time, in certain areas of Cape Town. He argues that part of the reason why these individuals became so idolized was because of the wealth and power that they managed to achieve, even though they all started off as poor youngsters from socio-economically unstable backgrounds. Even more powerful, was the discourse that arose, portraying these men as defying the oppressive Apartheid regime, breaking the laws of the oppressors. By politicizing their actions in this way, these men gained almost heroic status among some of the people who found themselves oppressed by the same system as them.

3.4 Conclusions

Four out of five of these studies have one thing in common; they all speak about the reason why one joins a gang. They do not however come to the same conclusions. Liljeholm Hansson (2014) argues that the environment in the area where one comes from, or grows up in, is a contributing factor of why people join gangs, while Mooney (2016) states something else. Her article says that it can be about things that the gang members have in common and that this is what brings them together. Wegner (2016) also speaks about the environment where one grows up, but in the meaning of their home environment and not the area itself. She further argues that joining gangs may also give you a sense of identity and belonging, which is what Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) state as well, in addition to their arguments of the importance in a sense of participation in the society to prevent one from joining gangs. Both Wegner (2016) and Steinberg (2004) bring up the fact that joining a gang brought money and power to the young men's lives and that this is why gangs are idolized.

4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, we are going to introduce some of the theories on which we will base our data analysis. These are all theories which we believe can help us understand and answer the research questions that we are studying. The first theory that we present can help us explain why some people join gangs and also what could have been done in order to prevent them from joining from the very beginning. Following theory focuses on how groups, or subcultures, are formed and maintained, which we believe can help us understand what it is that keeps a sense of unity within the gangs. The third theory can work as a tool to understand how collective identities are created and preserved within a gang. Lastly, the topic of the fourth theory is how a child can build resilience and through that avoid ending up in a destructive lifestyle.

4.1 Human ecology theories

There are theories which argue that crime can be explained by the area where one comes from and grows up in, which are known as human ecology theories. Sarnecki (2010) argues that there can be big differences between a poor and unstable area compared to a richer and more stable one, when it comes to crime rates. It has been shown that areas where people have bad health, substance addictions and high death-rate, are areas where people commit more crimes. The buildings in these areas are often decaying and therefore also have low rents. This is one of the main reasons why people stay here; if they had more money, many of them would most probably move somewhere else. He further states that one reason for the high crime-rate in these areas might be the poor social relations that occur among the people living there. Families are shattered and there is a lack of social institutions, like churches, well-functioning schools and associations where you can establish relations and a sense of affinity to other people in the area. In other words - the relations between the residents in these communities are shallow and not very personal.

According to this theory, there are specific norms and values that subsist in these poor areas which support criminal behavior, especially among the young population (Sarnecki, 2010:53). Norms like these are transmitted e.g. through speech, gestures and contact between youths and active gang members. In the areas where poverty is a big

problem, compared to “rich” areas, unemployment and low education are also common problems, and the criminal lifestyle is a suitable solution for these adolescents that face this in their everyday lives. This theory states in fact that criminal behavior is socially transmitted by your surroundings and environment, and not by genes.

4.2 Subculture theory

In his theory about subcultures, Cohen states that youth crime and gang formations is in fact a working-class problem, which first and foremost can be found in the poorer areas of big cities (Sarnecki, 2010). Basing his theory on Merton's theory about strain, Cohen (ibid) argues that youth crime and gang formations are cultures that stem from the young working class boys' longing to be able to reach the norms that the middle class has established in society, but failing to do so because of their working-class background. When these working-class boys realize that they are having difficulties reaching these norms that the mainstream culture has set up, they begin to form their own cultures, integrating their own norms and values, or they start affiliating with groups that are already formed, in search for identity, belonging and safety (ibid). Within these subcultures, the norms and values are of the sort that these working-class boys have a possibility of reaching them, and therefore these groups provide something that the mainstream culture cannot. Cohen views youth crime as a group phenomenon and argues that within these groups, or gangs, that are formed, the norms and values are of the kind that encourage criminal acts.

Cloward and Ohlin also used Merton's strain theory as an inspiration when articulating their theory on subcultures (Sarnecki, 2010). Like Merton and Cohen, they too argue that the norms of the middle class are the established ones in society, and that the working class' lack of opportunities to reach these norms is the reason why criminal subcultures form or why people adopt a criminal lifestyle (ibid). However, Cloward and Ohlin state that these working-class boys do not just venture into any kind of criminal subculture or start affiliating with gangs randomly, but instead they argue that there are three different types of criminal careers that these individuals can end up within. The three different subcultures that they refer to are people who abuse drugs, people who have criminal careers and people who use violence in criminal purposes. Depending on one's surroundings and the area that one grows up in, the choice of subculture that one

enters will differ. For example, for a person to be able to develop some sort of criminal career, there need to be opportunities to establish connections to older, more experienced people within criminal networks (ibid).

4.3 Social identity theory

The Social identity theory was developed by Tajfel in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Carter, 2010). This theory seeks to explain how social identities are formed, and more specifically describes such things as why individuals act according to expectations that the group has for them, rather than stick to their usual behavior. Furthermore, this theory can help explain how a person's behaviors can be influenced by a group which they identify with. Social identities can contribute to shaping what is seen as tolerable behavior within a group, regulate social interactions through providing boundaries and determining the goals that a group strives to achieve (ibid). According to Carter (2010) it is what the individuals in a group have in common and which separates them from people outside of the group, that creates the sense that they form a unique unit together. Mechanisms like self-categorization leads the individual to view themselves as part of a group, that is accredited with positive characteristics by the individual. Furthermore, the process of social comparison creates a negative perception of the people outside of the group. Hennigan and Spanovic (2012) also argue that in order for an individual to be accepted in a group, they can come to act in a way that is not necessarily in consistency with how they would usually behave. By becoming group-oriented, a person can eventually come to adopt the values and ways of the group and through this process start to think of themselves and others in a different way. They further argue that the social identity that is created within a group generates a sense of belonging with those who are part of it, and gives the members a sense that they are somehow unique.

4.4 The Circle of Courage

In an article about the resilience of children and youths that are in risk of establishing negative life outcomes, Brendtro and Larson (2004) argue that all human beings can be at risk of this, and that we need support from caring persons and an inner strength to be able to prevent this from happening. The way of achieving this inner strength is explained by them as a model called Resilience Code, which they mean contains the different strengths that the Circle of Courage presents. The Circle of Courage consists

of four principles which help a child or youth develop the necessary strengths that they need; *independence*, *mastery*, *generosity* and *belonging*. The first strength means that one is able to control their own actions and thoughts, as well as controlling problems and relationships with people that have a bad influence in their lives (Brendtro & Larson, 2004:198). *Mastery* is all about living up to expectations, being successful in academics and creative, as well as being able to acknowledge their own talents. Some of the main characteristics of the strength *generosity* is the ability to feel for others and help them when needed, in addition to understand what is right and what is wrong. The fourth and last strength, *belonging*, is basically about having a relationship with family and friends where you care for each other, and also about participating in school and programs within one's community. Yet again, all of these principles are not expected by a child to biologically possess, but to achieve by the support from a caring person in their environment.

5. Methods

5.1 Pre-understanding

During our fifth semester of our Social work studies, we spent five months interning in Cape Town, South Africa. One of us at a women's shelter and the other at a children's home. Something that we noticed during our time there was the fact that a lot of our clients were dealing with social problems that seemed to somehow relate to the same phenomenon; gang activity. At the first glance one might not think that problems like drug abuse, poverty and domestic violence would be related to gang violence and gang crime, but when talking to some of the people who were suffering from these problems, it was soon clear to us that a lot of their struggles were often somehow connected to this. Since we noticed that it was a recurring topic within the social work that we came across, the issue of gang activity in the Cape Town area was something that we wanted to study further.

5.2 Research method and model of data collection

We have used a qualitative method when conducting this study. According to David and Sutton (2016), qualitative methods often highlight words and stories, and can help the researcher collect information about someone's feelings, attitudes and values. It focuses more on describing a phenomenon rather than explaining the reason for it (ibid, p.100). Since we wanted to learn more about the culture that lies within gangs, and wished to hear about this from a source with first-hand experience, we chose to do qualitative interviews. The purpose of a qualitative interview is not to find knowledge and answers which are quantifiable and generalizable, but rather to collect data which can help the researcher to understand a phenomenon from the informant's point of view and perception (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Jacobsen (2012) argues that one of the strengths of using a qualitative method when collecting data, is that the fact that the researcher avoids influencing the information that is being collected as far as possible. By doing so, the likelihood increases that the data that is collected is representative of how the informants experience their reality.

Furthermore, we have used an inductive approach when conducting our study, which means that we have tried to use an explorative approach when going into the field that

we have chosen to study, and not let ourselves be affected by our previous knowledge or prejudice about the subject (Jacobsen, 2012). We do however realize that it is not possible for a researcher to completely disregard their preexisting perception and understanding of the phenomenon that they are studying, and have therefore tried instead to be aware of any such prejudice that we have taken with us into this research process. When using a qualitative research method and conducting a relatively small number of qualitative interviews as we have done in this study, it is not possible to draw general conclusions from the study, which could be seen as one of the downsides of using this type of method. Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) argue that quantitative methods have held, and still hold, a stronger support amongst many researchers within different disciplines, as these methods are most commonly used to produce results that are generalizable. They do however point to the fact that qualitative methods are useful when studying a phenomenon which is of a qualitative human sort, which we perceive the phenomenon studied in this case to be.

5.3 Selection of informants

We wanted to collect a wide range of information regarding our research questions, which is why we decided to both interview people who could tell us about Cape Town gangs from their own experiences, in addition to people who have professional knowledge about the gangs in Cape Town. The informants with personal experience of gangs are three ex-gang members who have been in gangs for many years, but who later have exited from these gangs. Two of our other informants have not been in gangs themselves but work with spreading knowledge about the matter of gangs in Cape Town to children, youths and adults. We learned about their organization through a friend who has good connections with NGOs and NPOs. After this, we got in touch with them through social media to ask for an interview. We wanted to conduct a study where not only ex-gang members' experiences would be heard, but also the experiences of people who work with the phenomenon of gangs in a professional context. This type of sampling is called a targeted selection and is based on choosing informants that are crucial in relation to the research questions of the study (Bryman, 2011). By choosing a variety of respondents who had different perspectives on the subject that we chose to study, we hoped to get a more nuanced perception of it.

Since we had been in Cape Town the previous semester before conducting the study, we had established connections with people who had personal experience of gang involvement. Two of them were interested in participating in interviews, and one of them then helped us get in touch with our third informant. This type of sampling is called “snowball sampling”, which means that one informant uses his or her social network to help the researcher find another informant (David & Sutton, 2016).

Snowball sampling can be beneficial when there is a hidden population for the study, and because one cannot know if someone is or have been a gangster before talking to them (and not even then sometimes), this was a suitable sampling technique for us. The disadvantage of the snowball sampling is however that the researchers cannot by themselves decide who is suitable for the study and who is not, but they must rely on others to choose the “right” people (ibid). One selection was however not an active choice of ours, which was the fact that all our informants are males. The reason for this is because it is not very common that females are part of gangs in Cape Town and therefore we did not come across any female gang members.

Jacobsen (2012) states that the number of informants is important when going through the selection. He further states that having many informants increases the amount of information that will be collected and that it also gives a more nuanced, detailed and wider point of view. We are aware that our study contains relatively few informants but have chosen to do so anyways. Jacobsen (ibid) does however also claim that it is not the number of informants that is important in qualitative studies, but whether they can give useable and interesting information in relation to one’s research questions or not. We tried to get in touch with other professionals as well, to get a wider range of information regarding the studied phenomenon, but we were not able to conduct any further interviews. However, the two informants with professional knowledge about gangs who participated were able to give us enough information to conduct the study.

5.4 Implementation

The interviews that we conducted were semi-structured interviews, which means that one converses with the informant in a casual way but with certain limitations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). The purpose of this is that the conversation is not fully open, yet not fully closed; there is an interview guide prepared with propositional questions but at the

same time room for supplementary questions and letting the conversation to take new paths. We had divided our questions into four different themes; *introduction, gang situation in Cape Town, personal experiences of gang activity* and *concluding questions*. When interviewing the informants that did not have personal experience of gang involvement, we used the same interview guide, but removed the theme *personal experience of gang activity*. The reason why we used introductory- and concluding questions was because we did not want to head straight into the personal questions that might be hard to talk about right away, we wanted the informant to feel comfortable (Jacobsen, 2012). We wanted to have concluding questions because we felt that they could reduce the risk of the informant feeling like the conversation was just cut out of nowhere, but rather that they would be prepared that it was about to come to an end. We used the following as a concluding question: “is there anything else you’d like to add?”, so that the informant had a chance to say everything they wanted and not having to leave anything out (ibid). The interviews took between 50 minutes and two hours and were audio recorded. The benefit of recording an interview is that the interviewer does not have to focus on anything else, like for example taking notes and trying to listen at the same time, but instead being able to pay full attention to the informant. This is also a way for the interviewer to show that they are interested in the informants’ stories and want to listen to what is being said (ibid).

Our aim was first to have five individual interviews but since our two informants with professional knowledge wanted to do the interview together we did one group interview with the two of them and subsequently three individual interviews with the informants with personal experiences.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) point to the importance of letting the informant choose a place to be interviewed so that they can feel as comfortable as possible. This was however not possible in our case. Cape Town is a city with a very high crime rates and some areas, in particular, are more dangerous than others. We had been told these areas were not safe for two foreigners to go to, which is why we arranged an office space closer to town where we knew it was safe to conduct the interviews.

After each interview, we wanted all data to be written down, which is why we transcribed the recordings. We left out all words and sounds such as “uhm” and “eh”,

because we believed them to be irrelevant for the study and that it would be easier to analyze the data without these distractions. When transcribing we used brackets to show where we added our own interpretations to certain quotes, such as translating or explaining the context. We marked out when pauses were made by the informants, using punctuation marks. Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) state that there are no specific rules as to how one should go about transcribing recorded material from an interview, but instead stress the importance of being transparent in one's choice of how this is done.

5.5 Method of analysis

We chose to do a combined analysis of our collected data, using both content analysis and narrative analysis. Jacobsen (2012) argues that combining two different methods of analysis could be an advantage, as different methods of analysis often examine different elements in the data. We chose a combined method since we wanted to study the collective narratives that could be found within the gangs and the message that these conveyed, and believed that these two methods combined could help us do just that. To be able to find narratives and interpret what type of messages that they conveyed, we used a narrative analysis. This is a method that is used to examine stories by looking at things like key events, people and places (ibid). By examining these different elements in the narratives that our informants shared with us, we were able to interpret how these contributed to the collective identity within the gangs.

By using a narrative method of analysis, we were also able to focus on what was told and perceived by the informants, rather than searching for an objective truth (ibid). As the purpose of this study was not to look for an absolute truth but to examine the informants' perception of the phenomenon that was studied, we found this method suitable. However, we have not conducted a narrative analysis in the sense that we have looked at stories and narratives over time, which is often what researchers do when using a narrative method of analysis (ibid). To be able to find mutual narratives and look at how they corresponded with each other, we combined the narrative analysis with a content analysis. A content analysis is often used to find patterns within the data that has been collected and create comprehensibility, where one looks for recurring themes within the data (ibid). Since we wanted to look at collective narratives within the gangs,

we went through the data and looked at what different themes could be found, that were recurring. These were later placed as subcategories within themes that we had based on our research questions. After doing this, we looked at the different narratives that these subcategories contained and analyzed these.

5.6 Trustworthiness

When conducting a study one needs to make sure the results of the study is trustworthy, and because we have conducted a qualitative study, we decided to examine the trustworthiness of the study with the help of four related concepts; *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*. Some may use the concepts *validity* and *reliability*, but we chose *trustworthiness* since this concept was conducted to be used in qualitative studies, while *validity* and *reliability* are more suitable for quantitative studies (Bryman, 2011).

Bryman (ibid) states that the concept *credibility* is also known as internal validity, within quantitative research. Jacobsen (2012) argues that, when studying a social phenomenon, it is not possible to state that the results of one's study are objectively accurate, since there is no such thing as an absolute truth when it comes to such phenomena. He does however point to the fact that one phenomenon can be perceived in the same way by most people, or by many people, which would be the closest to an absolute truth one could get when studying social phenomena. In order to increase the credibility of our study, we have used several quotes when referring to things that were said during the interviews, in order for the reader to be able to interpret these in their own way and compare this to our interpretations. In addition to this, we have reported the results to the persons who have been studied so that they could validate our perception of the empirics (Bryman, 2011).

Transferability is used to examine whether the same results of a study would be achieved if it was conducted again but in a different time and context (Bryman, 2011). Our study does not consist of many interviews, but they have however been conducted with many questions as well as supplementary questions which has resulted in a thick description of our data. This means that we have been given a profound view of the phenomenon, and this is something that Bryman (ibid) states as crucial for a study to be

transferable. It can however be difficult to achieve exactly the same results as we did in our study, if one conducts the same study again but in a different context. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) claim, a qualitative interview is dependent on the context in which it was implemented; if you change the time for when the interview is conducted as well as the interviewer, you may get different results.

The third concept, *dependability*, is a tool which is used to make sure that the study can be properly reviewed by others. We have done this by making sure that every step of the process of conducting this study was presented and accessible to the reader (Bryman, 2011). This was for example done by presenting how our interviews were structured and conducted (see 5.4). *Confirmability* means one must make sure they have acted without letting any personal values affect the process of the study. To increase the trustworthiness, we have been aware of our prejudices throughout the whole process of the study, so that they would not make too big of an impact on the results (ibid). All people do not however understand the world in the exact same way, which is why total objectivism can never be achieved (Thomassen, 2007).

5.7 Ethical considerations

There are a few ethical considerations that one need to keep in mind at all time, when researching about human phenomena. According to the Swedish research council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002) here are four requirements that need to be met when conducting a study within the humanities and social sciences. The first requirement is that the individuals who are asked to participate in the study need to be provided with information about the process. For example, information about the aim of the study, how the study will be conducted, the fact that participation is voluntary, and that they can withdraw their participation at any time during the process. We provided this information through an information letter that was sent via email to the individuals who were asked to participate (see appendix 2).

The second requirement that applies, states that the participants must leave their consent before taking part in the study, that this should be done voluntarily throughout the whole process. This was done through asking the informants to sign a document which stated that they gave their consent to participating, before the interviews were

conducted. Even though they had already been provided with an informational letter, the informed consent form that was signed, also contained information about conditions of the participation.

There is a requirement that states that confidentiality applies when conducting research where ethically sensitive matters are involved. The participants in the study are not to be identifiable through any details or names that could be mentioned in the study. We do realize that the subject of our study is one of ethically sensitive kind, since gang involvement is a criminal act in South Africa. To decrease the risk of anyone being able to identify the informants we have removed names of both individuals and areas, and only used quotes that do not contain personal information that could reveal any of the informant's identities. We used sound recordings as a tool during our interviews, but only after getting consent to do so from the informants. These were recorded on our phones and later transferred onto our computers where we transcribed the recorded material. When transcribing the material, we left out names of people and places.

The last requirement states that the collected data cannot be used for any other purpose than what it was meant for. Therefore, data can only be used to fulfill the purpose of the study that one has set out to conduct. We have reassured all of our informants that the collected data will not be used for any other purpose than the one that they have been informed about (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

Furthermore, we decided to write in English, even though this is not our native language, since we wanted the informants who took part in the study to be able to take part of the results of the study before it was submitted. We are however aware that writing in English can have a downside as well. This makes the study available to more people, which means that the risk of revealing the informants' identities is increased. We have however, as previously stated, left out details which could identify them and therefore believe that writing in English has more advantages than disadvantages.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2014) stress the fact that the unequal power relations that exist between the researcher and the informant must be taken into consideration when conducting an interview. They point to the fact that it is the researcher who decides what topics are to be spoken about, who gets to ask questions and who is the one that is

going to interpret and present what has been said during an interview. This is an unequal power relation that is difficult to avoid, and that needs to be taken into consideration by the researcher when conducting a study. We do realize that this unequal power relation might have had an impact on what was said and how it was said during our interviews.

We would like to acknowledge the fact that we have conducted this study in a country where black and colored people have been oppressed by white people for a very long time. We understand that this context could possibly affect our study, as we are two white women from Sweden, conducting interviews with colored and black people in South Africa. This unequal power relation is one that we did not want to and could not ignore when we were conducting our study, and therefore tried to take into consideration at all times.

6. Results and analysis

In this chapter, we are going to present our analysis of the data that we have collected, using three different themes. Within each theme we will present a set of subcategories, which are based on the different narratives that we found in the collected data. Once we had selected the narratives that we found relevant to our research questions and divided them into subcategories, we placed them into the themes that we had based on our research questions. We chose the following themes: “Social factors”, “Significant stories, symbols and values” and “Preventions”.

Informants 1-3 are people with personal experiences of being part of a gang and informants 4 and 5 have professional knowledge about Cape Town gangs.

6.1 Social factors

To answer our first research question we examined different narratives regarding social factors, that occurred in the collected data. When using the term “social factors” we refer to different social circumstances such as socio-economic conditions and social relations. The following subcategories contain different narratives regarding social conditions that have played a role in building and maintaining a collective identity within Cape Town gangs.

6.1.1 *The gang as a family*

When going through the collected data, it became clear to us that there was a narrative which was prominent, where the gang was portrayed as a family, and fellow gang members were seen as brothers. All of the informants that had been part of a gang stated that they felt a sense of belonging in the gang, and explicitly said that they felt like they found a family within their gang. Informant 1 stated that:

To me personally it was being part of a family. [...] We weren't friends, we were brothers. Not only the fact that we lived in each other's houses but I knew if you're hungry you're gonna come home with me and eat. If you know that I haven't eaten, haven't been home, know if the police are looking for me you can hide out at my place and as it went along it become like that with the other gang that we joined.

I felt more at home than being at home.

Informant 3 had a similar experience of the gang acting as a family in his life, and first mentioned that the other members of the gang were like his brothers, but also stated further that:

Okay to be honest with you, it's this gang leader, that was almost like my father figure. He plays a big role in me actually staying in this gang.

Wegner (2016), as well as Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012), argue that part of why some people join gangs is because they find a sense of belonging and of being part of a group where people care for them and appreciate them. We found that, what our informants said was in consistency with this. All of our informants stated that a sense of belonging was a part of why they chose to join gangs and stay in these gangs for as long as they did. We believe that a dominant narrative within a group, that states that everyone who is a member is also a part of the “family”, creates a strong sense of unity and cohesion.

Wegner (2016) states that a sense of belonging is something that the informants in her study appreciated about the gang because they are not provided with this in their homes. She points to the fact that they often came from unstable home environments, where they had not been provided with a sense of social stability and support. Having people who appreciated them and were happy to see them was something that they valued, and found in the gangs that they joined. This was also one of the narratives that we found amongst the informants who had personal experience of gang involvement; their family could not provide them with the support and sense of belonging that they needed, but the gang could. Informant 2 spoke about how the lack of love and support from his parents played a big role in his choice of joining a gang:

...because I didn't have my mother and my father giving me love and support, neither the rest of my family, especially when I finished school, I went to go look for love somewhere else and I found it on the streets, in a gang.

Our informants with professional experience of working with gangs spoke about how someone who does not get recognized and encouraged by their family often look for that in other places, and that the gangs can often fill that void.

...then you feel proud of yourself, like ‘yeah, these guys recognize everything that I’m doing’. But in your house, you didn’t get all these kinds of things. This is also in terms of rejection from your family, they neglect you and then the gangs always welcome you.

Informant 4

Carter (2010) argues that the things that individuals in a group have in common and that separates them from people who do not belong to the group, is what creates a sense that they form a unique unit. It is possible that the unity that exists within these gangs is helped by the fact that a lot of the members have found in each other what they could not find elsewhere.

6.1.2 Living in unstable and excluded communities

Something we found often mentioned in all of the interviews was the fact that gang members seem to often come from and live in communities which are unstable and excluded. Our informants told us about how the residents of these communities are often very poor with a very low or almost no education at all, which has led to a high rate of unemployment:

So, the area is very, very, very poor. [...] I wouldn’t say none of the adults but out of 10 adults, maybe 2 have jobs. All the other adults were either part of a gang or they push around a shopping cart or in some way begging, standing at the traffic lights and those kinds of things. So everybody is poor. [...] Education level in the area is also like 2 out of 10 people actually went to school, finished [primary] school.

Informant 1

Two of the other informants also stated the fact that the low education level in the areas is a contributing factor to an unstable community, while all four validated what Informant 1 stated about the poverty and lack of employment.

...because of poverty, because of joblessness, because of hunger...

Informant 2

All of the informants that have personal experiences of being part of gangs further stated that the poverty in the community where they lived and grew up has played a big role in the decision of joining gangs from the start, which also Informant 5 validates.

...they're gonna do crime to get money [...]. Because the people are poor in that areas

Informant 3

Now that's a big problem, as that minimum economy participation, or none, creates gangs, and now we have 3 million people who are not able to sustain themselves, and that would mean people would want to do things that would enable them to feed themselves.

Informant 5

With the help of the Human ecology theories one can argue that the area where someone grows up may be a factor that plays a role in their choice of joining a gang. As Sarnecki (2010) argues, living in a “poor” community, in comparison to the “richer” ones, leads to a higher risk of committing crimes. The reason for this is low education levels and a lack of employment in these areas, which makes some of the residents turn to a criminal lifestyle as a solution to these problems. Informant 2 mentioned the fact that the community where he grew up is a “drug and gang infested area”, and according to the Human ecology theories, one of the reasons why crime is more common in certain areas is because of the commonness of substance abuse in the community (ibid). Liljeholm Hansson (2014) also states that causes of people committing crimes can be circumstances that are affecting their lives because of the area where they live.

This was also one thing that some of our informants mentioned as a part of their sense of unity within the gangs; that they all came from similar backgrounds and that this made them feel more connected to each other. Mooney (2016) states that when everyone in a gang comes from the same community, the connection that they have to that place can contribute to a collective identity within the gang. Some of our

informants did speak about the fact that members of a gang often come from the same area, but that the gangs are often big and therefore have branches in different areas around the city. However, the areas that these gang members come from are often similar to each other in terms of socio-economic standard and population. Therefore, we believe that knowing that others come from a similar background, even if that would be a different area than your own, could also contribute to creating a sense of connection and strengthen the collective identity within the gang.

6.1.3 Gang members' and outsiders' perceptions of gangs' role in the community

When looking at how our informants who had personal experience of gang involvement perceived the role that the gang played in the community, we found that there were conflicting narratives that regarded this. On the one hand, there was a narrative that portrayed the gangs as a phenomenon that was not all bad, but that also brought a lot of good to people and communities. For example, they portrayed themselves as protectors and providers of and for the community, where they said that the gangs help people and communities with for instance financial and safety issues. Informant 1 spoke about how he would not hurt people within his own community:

And the community is brainwashed into believing that the gangs are there to protect them. In a sense, it is true, they do keep outsiders [away]... because if we've grown up in the same community we know each other for our whole lives. I'm not going to mug you; I'm not going to mug your mother. So the only time that would happen is if people from a different area comes in. And that's where the gangsters again protect the community that they are from.

The informants also stated that this is not a perception that is limited to only gang members and how they view themselves, but that in fact, it is a perception that also correlates with what people who are not involved in gang activity but live in the gang affected communities think of gangs. Steinberg (2004) argues that in the 1990s some of the gangsters in Cape Town were idolized by the community. He states that part of the reason for this was because they were individuals who had come from a poor background and still managed to gain status and wealth in life, which was not common within some of these poor areas. Informant 5 spoke about how these gang members are

the only financially wealthy people who choose to stay in the areas that are most affected by gangs:

Gangs influence how the society will behave, because the ones that will make it in the townships, the one that will make it in the Cape flats, they would leave, because they don't want to have their kids growing up in those conditions, you know? And then the guys that are there to influence what happens in those communities are gang members.

Informant 5

Informant 5 further spoke about how sport facilities and football teams are owned by prominent gang leaders in some of the gang affected areas, and how these gang leaders contribute with money when the community needs a new church or needs to hold a community meeting. He stated that this is done by the gangsters since the government is not providing these areas with any of these things, and so the community looks up to the gangsters, because they are able to provide for the community what the government is not.

We interpret the narrative above as one that portrays gangs as a positive phenomenon that the community appreciates, but that is not the only narrative regarding this. The informants who had previously been part of a gang also portrayed themselves and the gangs as feared and notorious within their communities. Informant 2 spoke about this in the quote below.

But gangsters are very much feared in South Africa, in Western Cape especially. Because you know these guys don't give two shits about killing you, and I mean it's not nice knowing that you're going to get killed because of something you said.

Informant 2

Informant 5, who is a person with professional experience of working with gang issues, remembered a specific event, where it became clear to him that some people in the community were so fed up with the situation that they took it upon themselves to try and create change.

Back in 1996 there were interventions in dealing with gangs, violent interventions. That also gave birth to a militant group called PAGAD; people against guns and drugs. I remember when we had to walk our cousin to school because my cousin stayed at [name of area] and my cousin used to go to school to [name of area], communities that are very close to each other. A gang leader would be hanged, was hanged in a street light, by the PAGAD, and that was 1996, they were a very militant group.

Informant 5

The extreme act of violence that Informant 5 spoke about could be seen as an act that implies that some people in the community had a strong anger towards the gangs, and that actions like these were their way of dealing with a situation where they felt that the government was not stepping in.

According to Hennigan and Spanovic (2012), social identities are engaged in, by individuals because they can help achieve a positive self-image and better self-esteem, as that person views the group to which they belong, as unique in a positive way. Doing good for the community, providing what is not provided by anyone else and standing out in terms of material wealth and status could all be things that creates a sense with the gang members, that the gang one belongs to is somehow different from the rest of the community, in a positive way. This however, does not explain how the image of gangs as dangerous and feared would contribute to a positive social identity. Both Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) and Wegner (2016) argue that one of the reasons that people join gangs is the fact that it makes them feel as if they are part of something, that they are someone. It could be that gang members, even though they realize that they are harming others and that they are disliked by parts of the community, still gain a sense that they are someone of importance, rather than no one as they become part of a gang. This sense of being someone of importance could thereby help create a social identity within a gang that makes the members feel that they are unique in a positive way, just by being part of a group that makes them feel appreciated.

6.2 Significant stories, symbols and values

To answer our second research question, we looked for different types of narratives that involved significant stories, symbols and values. When using the term “stories”, we

refer to historical events and people, real or mythical, that our informants mentioned and that we have perceived as crucial to the gang culture of Cape Town gangs. By “values” we mean the mutual values that exist within the gangs. These values are ones that we have found through our interpretation of the narratives in the collected data. When using the term “symbols”, it is symbols that are pointed out as crucial by the informants, in the process of building and maintaining a collective identity, that we are referring to. We found narratives regarding five different subcategories that were frequently occurring in the collected data, which are presented below.

6.2.1 Influential people and events in the history of Cape Town gangs

There is a dominant narrative within the gang culture of Cape Town gangs that tells the story of how the number gangs came into existence, the story about Nongoloza, which we have mentioned previously. This is a story that all of our informants mentioned, and pointed out as a crucial part in the history of Cape Town gangs. According to Steinberg (2004) the story about Nongoloza is one that explains the creation of number gangs as a means of fighting against the oppressor, the Apartheid regime. Informant 5 spoke about how the story of Nongoloza has created the idea that gangs is a phenomenon that is a given part of the society.

And within the history there's always a story that affirmed that gangs must be. Which is a story that is taken from the prison gangs, the story of Nongoloza, and they've been there for 100 years. The story of Nongoloza and Kilikijan also strengthened the need for gangs to exist, you know. It validated it, it kind of validated that gangs must be [...] I mean those were the first people who started to form structure, to conceptualize the whole ideology of gangs, you know. [...] That structure that they created, it also gave a lot of strength to these gangs because... there's a lot of indoctrination that exists in prison, when they get there those people would tell you a lot of things about why things are wrong and how they are wrong, and you'd be amazed of their understanding of the world, of a system from how bad it was back then, [...] And from those prison gangs, they transferred those ideas into the gangs outside.

The idea that gangs are fighting the oppressor and oppressing system that they are living within is one that does not just apply to the number gangs, but one that is prominent when it comes to the purpose of street gangs in Cape Town as well. Two of the

informants spoke about how street gangs were formed in the 1940s as a means to fight and protect the oppressed people against the Apartheid regime. Informant 2 mentioned that some of the biggest street gangs have been around for more than 60 years, and that they were formed when the Apartheid regime forcefully moved colored people out of the area that is called district six and into areas in the Cape flats, which are areas where gang crime is a common phenomenon today.

That life is hard, I'm not gonna lie to you. The Apartheid era made it harder, reason being you get thrown out of your place of birth, it's your roots, it's like your roots is taken away from you. So, and you can't say anything about it, if you want to say anything about it you get shot, you get what I'm saying? Or you get tortured. So this made gangsters stand up, that's why you'll see today in the newspaper or on television they'll write reports about cops who were pushed out of Manenberg, cops who were pushed out of Lavender Hill, they can't go in there.

Informant 2

The areas that informant 2 spoke about here are two areas where gang crime is common. According to Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012), the police can be seen as representatives of the society which turned their back on people in certain areas, which could be linked to how the society treated black and colored people during Apartheid. We interpret the fact that the police sometimes get pushed out of these areas as a sign that gangs still view themselves as groups that are fighting against the government, even though the Apartheid regime has not been in power for over 20 years. Steinberg (2004) claims that the narrative portraying gang leaders as a type of heroes who were fighting the Apartheid regime was a dominant one in the 1990s, that created a sense that breaking laws was not a bad thing, since it was the laws of the oppressor that were broken. This seems to be a narrative that somehow still lives, as all of the informants somehow mentioned that some of the residents in the communities where gangs are the most active have a positive perception of gangs. We will go more into depth on how gangs are perceived and perceive themselves later in this chapter. Mooney (2016) argues that the collective identity within a group can be strengthened by the historical context that that group exists within. In this case, we believe that this is applicable to the gangs of Cape Town, where their history of being oppressed and discriminated against as a people could be something that strengthens the sense of unity within them. This

could also explain why stories of people like Nongoloza and some gang leaders play such a big role in how these gangs view themselves; the values and morals that these stories convey, are ones that the gangs build much of their social identity around.

6.2.2 Symbols and rituals as a means of creating unity within a gang

Different symbols and rituals were pointed out by the informants as crucial in the process of identifying oneself or others as a member of a gang. Something that was mentioned by all of the informants who had personal experience of being part of a gang was the importance of tattoos. They all stated that one way to identify if someone that they meet is a member of a gang is to look for tattoos that are gang related.

You don't know this guy from a bar of soap but just because you have the same tattoo it's like 'My bro! Salute!'.

Informant 2

According to Mooney (2016), physical attributes like clothes and hairstyles can be what helps separate members of a subculture from people outside of the group. In this case one could assume that the importance of specific tattoos within a gang could have the same meaning. It is one of the things that separates the members of a gang from the non-members. Furthermore, Mooney (ibid) states that language and rituals can help create a collective identity within a subculture. This corresponds with one of the more prominent narratives that we found in our collected data, where initiation rituals and a particular spoken gang language were portrayed as crucial parts in identifying oneself and others as gang members. Informant 1 spoke about how he can detect if a person that he meets is a gang member through speaking with them in the gang language, which is called Sabela:

I use Sabela, the gang language, say a couple of things in the language. Not like heavy, like Sabela in prison, I just say things that only a gangster would know.

According to informant 2 the language that is called Sabela, is a mix of different South African languages and was made up so that inmates would be able to communicate with each other inside of prison without the wardens being able to understand what was said. Spoken languages and slang that are used or made up within a subculture can be

essential parts of the culture (Mooney, 2016), and even though Sabela is a language that is used not only within one gang, but rather one that is spoken by most gang members in South Africa, it seems to be of great importance in the process of identifying oneself or others as part of a gang or a gang culture in Cape Town. Initiation rituals is another symbolic action that might have a similar purpose within these gangs. Informant 2 spoke about rituals that needed to be performed by an individual in order for them to be accepted into the gang, and about group rituals that were carried out by members of the gang as a sort of initiation rite for a new member. He stated that:

The organization I worked for, [...] we have rituals, like if you wanna join our company, or our gang, let me rather put it that way, you have one of two choices. You either need to bring a shitload of money to the organization to prove to us that you really want to be here or you must kill someone.

Committing serious crimes like hurting and killing people was something that was mentioned by all of the informants who had personal experience from gang involvement, as a natural part of being a gang member, or as a stepping stone into gang membership. This seems to be a ritual that is used for new members to prove that they are serious and worthy of their membership. Hennigan and Spanovic (2012) state that an individual can come to do things that is not in accordance with their usual behavior in order for them to be accepted by a group. Killing someone is something that most people cannot imagine themselves doing, and so this could be an act that is carried out by people in the gang or who are aspiring to be part of it, in order to show the group that they are serious about their membership. As previously stated, Mooney (2016) argues that rituals help form a collective identity within a group, and in this case, killing or seriously harming someone could act as a symbolic ritual that does just that; strengthens the sense of a collective identity within the gang.

6.2.3 Benefits of being part of a gang

Through all of our interviews we found several narratives regarding what benefits one gets from being a gang member, and how these had made the informants both want to join a gang and to stay in it. The most common narratives regarding benefits in the interviews revolved around money, safety and status.

All of our informants with personal experiences of gangs mentioned that poverty has been a big problem where they grew up and that this has been an important factor when it comes to why they decided to become and remain a gangster. They stated that gang members make more money compared to people in their surroundings who are not involved in gangs, and that this is what made them like the lifestyle. Informant 1 stated:

...and also get rich quickly, I didn't want to work a 9-5 job and earn a little money.

The two informants with professional knowledge also stated that money is seen as one of the benefits of being a gang member, which corresponds with the previous statement from Informant 1. Informant 5 said that people who join gangs expect to gain money from it and that they do this because poverty is such a big problem in Cape Town:

Now that's a big problem, as that minimum economy participation, or none, creates gangs.

Because criminal gangs basically rule many areas in Cape Town, safety becomes a problem for everyone who live in these communities. Informant 1 told us about how he felt like he could walk anywhere, any time of the day, without anyone daring to touch him, because they feared him and that this would only be because he was a gangster. One important part of the safety for Informant 2 was the safety he could provide for his family:

So I was thinking to myself, the only way for me to make sure that my family is safe, they can come and go as they please without getting robbed, like they used to be robbed, I must become one of these guys.

Liljeholm Hansson (2014) claims that by showing your surroundings that you are tough, can take care of yourself and that people need to fear you, you will gain respect and make sure no one dares to start a fight with you. This is basically what informant 1 experienced that he as a gangster emitted to other people when he passed them by, and that he liked the kind of respect that this gave him. He spoke about one time when he was walking alone with a girl and spotted a group of people down the street. They

looked like they were going to rob him but he wanted to show that he was not afraid of them, that they should respect him:

When they saw us coming down the road, they like ‘yeah, we’re going to mug these people’ but when they saw it was me they knew that ‘ahaa.. we can’t touch this guy’. And that made me feel cool!

The third most common narrative was the one revolving status. All the informants mentioned several times that gangsters always have been the role models of their communities, which young boys always looked up to. What was brought up in all four interviews was that gangsters had money, nice cars, beautiful women around them and in addition to this, they were highly respected and often spoken of.

I just wanted to be a 26, because there where I grew up, if you’re wearing lekker takkies [nice sneakers] and you got a gun and you got a chain, man, you understand? Yoh! You’re like the man! And I’m watching you and I just wanna be with you, you see?

Informant 3

So most of the time they see the guys who have flashy cars, girlfriends, drinking all the time, but they don’t know what those guys are doing, so they tend to fall in the trap quick cause they think that guy has made it in life.

Informant 4

These results are in consistency with the results that Wegner (2016) present in her study. She argues that young men choose to join gangs for the same reasons that were brought up by or informants as well; for a more stable financial situation, in comparison to what they had while growing up. Furthermore, they are attracted by the protection and the status that is given when becoming a gangster. Steinberg (2004) also points to the fact that gang members often come from socio-economically unstable backgrounds and that joining a gang gives them the stability that they have never had before. He further states that this is also one of the reasons why gangsters are idolized among youths, while another reason is the status they have.

6.2.4 Responsibilities towards your fellow gang members

Accessing all these benefits that we just presented above did however not come for free. There were certain things that one had to do for the gang in return. There is especially one narrative that is often mentioned by all of the informants with personal experience of gang involvement; that it is expected by a gangster to die for their fellow gang members, meaning revenging them if they get killed:

We made an oath to die for one another. So if you gonna shoot me, my brother is gonna come kill you, even though I'm dead, they gonna come kill you one day, that is how it works.

Informant 3

Another responsibility that comes with being a part of these gangs is that one must know the story of Nongoloza, which all of our informants mentioned. The majority of them stated that one gets taught this story once one goes to prison, by the other members of the number gang that one decides to join. This is also the reason why in communities where gangsters are idolized one often refer to prison as "College of Knowledge". Informant 2 states:

You get waken up at 6 in the morning, you're now going to school and I'm like 'What the fuck! School? Where? I'm in prison, don't talk shit!' and they're like 'No, come' and you get taught on the history, and you get your exams also, and if you fail your exams there are sentences.

Furthermore, our informants pointed out different tasks that one is expected to do as a gangster. This could for example be that you must be willing to rob, hurt or even murder someone for the gang. It is not only expected of you to do this as an initiation test when joining the gang, but also throughout the whole "career" as a gangster.

According to the Social identity theory, having a collective identity within a group can lead to a determination of what behavior that is expected among the members of a group, as well as regulating rules and goals which the group must strive towards (Carter, 2010). The members of a group come together with the help of a collective aim where they create some sort of behavior code to which all members must adapt. Forkby

and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) argue, in similarity to the Social identity theory, that the actions of a gang member may originate from the expectations that the group has for them. Mooney (2016) also states that the way one behaves in the gang, as well as the social and criminal activities in the group, is what creates a subculture and an in-group and out-group.

6.2.5 Rules and punishments within the gangs

Being part of a gang is not as easy as just robbing someone and getting what you want. There are specific rules one must follow and if one does not, there will be consequences. We found several narratives in the collected data which all highlighted the rules that gangs have and what the punishments for breaking them are. All informants with personal experience of gang involvement spoke of the following two rules: one must always tell the truth to a fellow gang member and one must stay loyal.

You just must be loyal. Like he's my brother, I can't tell him lies, you understand?
And I can't talk behind him, I have to be honest with him at all time.

Informant 3

Liljeholm Hansson (2014) also argues that one important rule in gangs is the loyalty to the other gang members. In her words, it is all about listening to orders that come from the higher ranks as well as staying true to the gang and never going behind their backs. Informant 3 also stated that you must listen to your superiors or you will get punished. Furthermore, informant 1 said "stealing from a brother, that punishment is hectic". From this, we draw the conclusion that stealing from a "brother" could be seen as another way of breaking the loyalty-rule towards the gang.

As previously stated, breaking any of these rules will lead to tough consequences for the individual. In comparison to Liljeholm Hansson's (2014) statement where it is said that if one breaks a rule within the gang you will get physically punished and it could even lead to death or a terminated membership in the gang, it is similar to what our informants have said. All of the informants who are ex-gang members stated that breaking a rule leads to harsh punishments where one gets physically hurt by the rest of the gang. They also told us of the different scales of punishment depending on how big the "crime" is, as well as one's rank in the gang:

You maybe get beaten, by 12 guys, having big sticks. Or over your back and you can't do anything about it, you just have to sit down, kneel and take your punishment like a man. [...] It all depends on what kind of figure you are or what person you are within your organization, and what your crime was basically.

Informant 2

Another important rule, if not the most important one, is that one must never exit from the gang and the only way of doing this is by dying. Liljeholm Hansson (2014) states at one point that breaking a rule could lead to a terminated membership in the gang, which does not correspond with the results of our study. Three of our informants are in fact living proof that it is possible to exit from a gang, despite the rule that states that one is not allowed to do so. What they all said about this is that the gang tries to convince gang members that death is the only way out:

You're kinda brainwashed into believing that the only way out is by dying.

Rules are basically.. the only way that you leave a gang is in a coffin, the only way you leave is when you die.

Informant 1

6.3 Preventions

In order to answer our third research question, we looked at the narratives found in the collected data regarding preventative interventions. When using the word “prevention” we are referring to preventions that can be put into place to prevent the gang situation in Cape Town from escalating further and to decrease the number of people that join gangs. We found two different types of narratives that involved this theme, which we will speak about below. However, we chose to focus mostly on the one where change was seen as a possibility, as our research question regarding this focuses on possible preventions.

6.3.1 Longing for a change

As mentioned above we found two different narratives regarding what the future may hold in terms of gang activity and gang crime in Cape Town. All of the informants who had personal experience of gang involvement stated that it is impossible to eradicate the issue of gang crime completely in Cape Town, as it is something that runs so deep and goes a long way back in history. Informant 2 said the following regarding gang activity:

It's never gonna end, because of the roots that run so deep.

Although this was something that all the three informants with personal experience of gang involvement all agreed on, they still had ideas on how change could be created within the areas that are the most affected by gang crime. Informant 2 spoke about the importance of sports as a tool to keep young people away from gangs:

...because that is what's keeping the youngsters from drugs, from gangsterism; he does sport [...], have tournaments...

Brendtro and Larson (2004) claim that one thing that can help create resilience towards negative life outcomes is for a child to be involved in programs and activities within the community, which, from what we understand, could be for example sports or other clubs where children can engage in positive activities with other people from the community. Two of our informants spoke about how football clubs are often owned by gangsters in some areas, because the government does not provide the funds needed for the community to start them. If one of the goals with children's involvement in sports clubs is to keep them from joining gangs, one could argue that it would be better if football clubs in these gang affected communities were sponsored and owned by other people than gang members, in order for the children to not be influenced by people involved in gang crime. Governmental funding of sports associations, and other leisure activities, is also something that Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) mention as possible preventative measures that can be put into place to reduce criminal activity.

Brendtro and Larson (2004) argue that having a good relationship with friends and family is an important factor when it comes to building resilience towards a negative

life outcome. Even though it was not mentioned by any of the informants as a solution to the problem of gang crime, all of them spoke about the importance of having family and people who cared when growing up, at some point in their interviews. Furthermore, some of the informants spoke about how they had not been able to finish school or get a job, and how unemployment is one of the reasons why many people join gangs. The informants all stated that the fact that people want to earn money and cannot do so in any other way than committing crimes is a reason why people choose to join gangs. However, not being able to get a job or finish school could also be frustrating in the sense that one can experience this as a sort of failure to live up to expectations. Brendtro and Larson (2004) claim that being successful in for example academics and living up to expectations is another one of the factors that can help create resilience in a child or a youth. As Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) state, residents of a segregated community tend to find alternative paths, such as gangsterism, when feeling as if they have no participation in the society, regarding for example the opportunity of having a job.

As previously mentioned, our informants told us that the only role models in some communities are in fact gangsters, and that this is one of the reasons why they believe that people join gangs and that this needs to be changed in order for less people to do so:

The communities that we live in are such as, the children, when they are growing up they lack role models. [...] ...the parents leave to work around 7 am in the morning, they come at night. Meaning that the children are supposed to face the world alone in the time, so they make a decision according to what they see around their environment. So most of the time they see the guys who have flashy cars, girlfriends, drinking all the time, but they don't know what those guys are doing, so they tend to fall in the trap quick cause they think that guy has made it in life.

Informant 4

Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) also state the importance of having a role model that can show you “the right way” as well as having a caring and supportive person in your surroundings in order to keep away from criminal activities.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how different social factors and components help form a collective identity and a sense of belonging within the existing gang culture of Cape Town gangs. This was done by using data collected through qualitative interviews which was analyzed by using theories and previous research regarding gang crime, collective identity, social factors and social relations. In this last part of the study, we are going to discuss and summarize what was presented in the previous chapter as well as answer our research questions.

7.1 Social factors

Narratives about how social relations played a big role in the unity of the gangs were common in the data. The most prominent one was the one where the gang was portrayed as a family, that always helped each other and protected one another. The sense of belonging and unity that this creates is something that we believe is one of the biggest factors as to why people join and stay in gangs, and is also something that we perceive has played a big role in strengthening the collective identity within the gangs. The fact that many of the individuals who join gangs have not had the support and sense of belonging that they needed from their home environment, could be a crucial factor when it comes to their choice in joining a gang. This is also a factor that Wegner (2016) points out as contributing to young men's choice of joining a gang, in her study about gang members in Cape Town. Furthermore, the fact that they find in their fellow gang members what they have not been able to find elsewhere, is something that we interpret as a social factor that strengthens the collective identity, as this makes them feel that they are a unique unit that share something that nonmembers are not a part of.

To have a lot in common with the other members of the group that one belongs to is a factor that Mooney (2016) argues can help create unity within the group. We noticed that there was a narrative where sharing similar social backgrounds, not just in terms of social relations, but also in terms of other social factors such as socio-economic conditions was portrayed as a crucial part in the shared identity within the group. Having grown up in poor areas where getting involved in crime and gangsterism was seen as the only way to sustain oneself was something that the informants all pointed to

as a contributing factor to why they joined gangs. We believe that the fact that many gang members share similar backgrounds and often come from the same communities is something that strengthens the bonds within the gangs and the sense of a collective identity.

How gangs and gang members are perceived by themselves and by others was also something that we looked at in the analysis. There were conflicting narratives regarding this, where there were both good and bad things said about the gangs, by both themselves and the rest of the community. The narrative that portrays gangs as good and helpful for the community is one that we believe creates a sense within the gangs that their existence can be justified through this, which in turn contributes to strengthening a positive, shared identity within the group. When it comes to the narrative where gangs are portrayed as dangerous and harmful for the community, it could be that this negative perception does in fact strengthen the collective identity as well. We believe that the sense of being part of something and being someone of importance that could be created by the fact that people fear or despise you, can in fact make the group identity stronger, as it separates the in-group from the out-group, even if the reason for this is that the in-group is somehow bad.

7.2 Significant stories, symbols and values

The results of this theme showed that symbols, stories and values play a big role in helping to create and strengthen the collective identity within the gang culture. There were a few individuals who were pointed out as crucial in the history of Cape Town gangs. Some of these were people that were portrayed as freedom fighters, standing up against the oppressive Apartheid regime, sometimes helping people in poor communities. An event that was pointed out as crucial was for example the founding of some of the street gangs, which was said to be a reaction to the fact that the people were oppressed and discriminated against, and therefore had to find a way to protect themselves from the regime. We believe that these narratives about important people and events point to the historical context in which these gangs exist, which plays a big role in the way that they view themselves, and is a factor that strengthens the collective identity within them. The sense of being oppressed and discriminated is something that

still seems to be present in these gangs today, which could explain why the narratives about how they were founded is such a crucial part of the gang culture.

The narratives portraying symbols as crucial in the gang culture were many, and most of them indicated that symbols are used to be able to identify who belongs to the group or the culture and who does not. Tattoos were mentioned as a way of telling if an individual is a gang member and to which gang they belong, and language was seen as a tool to determine if someone belong to the culture or not. A specific language or slang is also mentioned by Mooney (2016) as a factor that contributes to the collective identity within gangs. Furthermore, rituals are used to symbolize someone's entry into the gang, and as a way of proving that one is worthy of the membership. We interpret these symbols and symbolic actions as ways to create a stronger unity within the gang, and a more defined boundary between members of the in-group and members of the out-group.

Shared values are something that we believe play a big role in creating a sense of belonging and unity within these gangs. We found that narratives that pointed to the importance of financial wealth, status and safety and how these are achieved by being part of a gang were common. The fact that the gang members strive towards the same goals is something that we interpret to be contributing to the collective identity that they share. Furthermore, we believe that the strict responsibilities and rules that apply within these gangs, are also contributing in building a collective identity, since they reinforce the sense that the gang is more important than anything else in the lives of the members. The clearest examples of this could be the rule that states that death is the only way out of a gang, and that one must be prepared to die for the other members of the gang.

7.3 Preventions

The last theme showed that despite the negative outlook that some of the informants had regarding a future, there were some positive approaches as well. Something that was brought up, in particular, was that a possible way of preventing youths from joining gangs could be by sports associations and other leisure activities. Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) argue that measures such as governmental funding of leisure activities such as sports are important when working to prevent gang crime. We believe that if a

person is busy with some sort of hobby or another occupation, they would get distracted from a criminal lifestyle and would not have the time left to engage in illegal activities. If one finds a passion for a sport or another leisure activity along with friends in these places, one could possibly find the love and sense of belonging that is needed there, instead of within a gang. The informants also stated that they were not provided with the love, safety and sense of belonging that they needed from their families, which was part of the reason why they were drawn to a gang. Our conclusion is that children need to have a caring and loving adult in their surroundings in order for them to have a stable place to turn to when they need guidance, and this does not have to come from a biological parent. Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) argue that having a good role model when growing up is a crucial part in avoiding a criminal lifestyle. A host parent or family could be a possible way to provide a child with what they are missing in their homes when the biological parents either are not around or do not have time or ability to care for themselves and their children.

Another important preventative measure which was pointed out and which we believe needs to be put into place, is working to reduce the segregation of the communities where gangsterism is common. Segregation is still a problem in Cape Town, more than 20 years after Apartheid. Many communities are still segregated and as some areas are downgraded in comparison to other areas the residents tend to take alternative paths, such as gangsterism and criminal activities. The government needs to take action against this and find a way to reduce the segregation in the city. Unemployment and lack of education were issues that several of the informants mentioned as reasons why gang crime is at such high rates in Cape Town. In order to prevent a further increase in gang crime, we believe that the government needs to invest in education and jobs for the people living in the socio-economically unstable areas around the city. In addition to the segregation between communities, there is also a segregation between communities and authorities, as for example the hate many people have against the police and government, that needs to be reduced. As previously stated, Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson (2012) suggest that this could be averted by letting police officers as well as politicians, exchange knowledge with youths in schools, in order for them to learn that the authorities and the government are actually more than just the uniform that they wear, that they are humans too.

Furthermore, we would like to emphasize the need for further research regarding the topic of gang involvement. This study has raised a lot of questions with us, such as why most the gang members in Cape Town are male, and what it is that helps keep girls and women from joining gangs in areas where gangs are pretty much everywhere. We would also like to know more about the impact that the Apartheid era has had on gang crime in South Africa and if today's youngsters are still affected by Apartheid in their choice of joining gangs.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide – ex-gang members

1. Introduction questions

- Where did you grow up?
- Can you tell us a little bit about the area that you grew up in?
- What was your social life like, growing up? For example, what was your relationship like to your family and friends?

2. Gang situation in Cape Town

- How would you describe the current gang situation in Cape Town?
- What do you know about the history of Cape Town gangs?
- (for example important persons/events that have helped shape the gang culture?)
- When you were growing up, how did people in your community talk about gangs? What was your idea of them before you joined?
- How do you know if a person that you meet in the street is a gang member?
- How do gang members communicate with each other? What language is used?

3. Personal experience of gang activities

- Can you tell us about when you got involved in gang activity for the first time? How did you get involved?
- What does it mean to you to be part of a gang?
- What was it that made you want to be a part of a gang?
- When you first got involved in gang activities, what were you expecting to gain from it?
- Were there any specific people that played a role in your choice of joining a gang?
- What was your relationships like to the other members of your gang?
- What did other gang members expect from you and what did you expect from them?
- What was your relationship like to members of other gangs?
- Did you feel like you belonged in the gang?
- What was it that made you stay in the gang?
- What was it that created a sense of unity within your gang?
- Were there any specific rules that you had to follow to be part of the gang and if so, what were they?
- What happens if you don't follow the rules of the gang?

4. Concluding questions

- How easy is it to exit from gangs, which motives are legitimate and which are not?
- What do you think needs to be done in communities in order for less people to join gangs? (What do you think could have been done in your case?)
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Interview guide – professionals

1. Introduction questions

- Tell us about the work that you do at the organization?
- How did you come up with the idea to found this organization?
- What are you hoping to achieve through your work?

2. Gang situation in Cape Town

- How would you describe the current gang situation in Cape Town?
- What do you know about the history of Cape Town gangs?
- What do you know about important persons/events that have helped shape the gang culture of Cape Town gangs?
- When you were growing up, how did people in your community talk about gangs?
- How do you know if a person that you meet in the street is a gang member?
- How do gang members communicate with each other? What language is used?
- Do different gangs use different symbols and what kind of symbols could that be? (hand signs, tattoos, graffiti?)
- What does it mean to be part of a gang?
- What do you think are the main reasons that so many people join gangs here in Cape Town?
- Why do you think people stay in the gang once they have joined?
- Are there any specific rules that has to be followed to be part of a gang and if so, what are they?
- What happens if you don't follow the rules of the gang?
- Do different gangs have different turfs that they control? How do they control these turfs?

4. Concluding questions

- How easy is it to exit from gangs, which motives are legitimate and which are not?
- What do you think needs to be done in communities in order for less people to join gangs?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix 2



GANG CULTURE IN CAPE TOWN INFORMATION LETTER

You have been invited to participate in a study about the gang culture in Cape Town. Before you decide on participating we would like you to know the meaning of this study and what we will be writing about. Please read below and if you still have questions you can always get in touch with us and ask what you want to know. You will find contact details at the bottom of this page.

Who are we?

Our names are Arjeta Ferati and Tove Byröd. We are two Social Work students from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, who are currently in South Africa to gather information for our Bachelors thesis.

The purpose of this study and how the study will be conducted

Our aim is to understand how group identities and gang culture are formed and maintained within of Cape Town gangs in relation to social codes and values. This study will be conducted through several interviews with people who have knowledge in different ways about Cape Town gangs.

Participating in this study

The participation of this interview is voluntary. If you decide on participating, we will arrange a meeting with you and ask you some questions about your experience with gangs of Cape Town. This will take about 30-60 mins. Unfortunately, we cannot give any compensation for your participation, since this goes against the ethical principles that apply when writing a study.

Consent form

We will need you to sign a consent form that says that we informed you about the meaning of our thesis and that you do this voluntarily and can say no to this if you want to. We will bring this form to the interview.

Do I have to go through with the interview if I change my mind, even though I already signed the form?

No, you can stop the interview whenever you want to if you feel uncomfortable, without having to explain why. We are aware that some people might find it difficult to talk about this topic and therefore we do understand if you don't want to participate. You can also go through with the interview and then take it back, so that we don't use it in our study. It is however not possible to take your interview back once it has been published.

Will I be anonymous?

Yes, we will leave out any kind of information that can lead back to you.

How will you use the information I give you in the interview?

We will do a voice recording during the interview, if you are okay with that, and then print what was said. After printing it out the recording will be deleted. The information we get out of your interview will be analyzed together with a few more interviews and presented in the study.

After the interview

If you have any questions or thoughts about our study or the interview, you are always welcome to contact us either by phone or email (see below).

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